

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8817

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 03432

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: BEXP, PFOR, EG, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE

REF: LONDON 3177

SUMMARY: WE REQUEST URGENT GUIDANCE RE QUESTION OF US-UK COOPERATION ON THIS PROJECT. END SUMMARY.

1. FCO EGYPTIAN DESK OFFICER NIXON CALLED EMBASSY THIS MORNING (MARCH 19) TO REQUEST CLARIFICATION OF USG POLICY ON COOPERATION WITH BRITISH IN CLEARING CANAL OF EXPLOSIVES. HE HAD IN MIND STATE DEPT. SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS OF MARCH 18 AND FACT US ADMIRAL ON HIS WAY TO LONDON HAS NO RPT NO INSTRUCTIONS YET TO DISCUSS NEXT STEP WITH BRITISH MOD.

2. NIXON EXPLAINED THAT UK HAS ASSUMED US AGREEMENT ON BASIS MARCH 11 DISCUSSION IN DEPARTMENT FOLLOWED BY MARCH 12 OR 13 NOTIFICATION TO DEPARTMENT THAT UK PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE ALL IT CAN. EGYPTIANS HAVE BEEN INFORMING BRITISH TEAM IN CAIRO OF VARIOUS COORDINATING PROCEDURES THEY HAVE IN MIND (E.G. PLANNING CONFERENCE IN ALEXANDRIA UNDER OVERALL AEGIS OF EGYPTIAN NAVY, ETC.) BUT EGYPTIANS HAVE ALSO ASKED BRITISH TO CONSULT  
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DIRECTLY WITH USG AS TO NEXT STEPS.

3. BRITISH MINE HUNTERS AND SUPPORT SHIP LEAVE PORTSMOUTH TOMORROW, MARCH 20, FOR EGYPT. WILL TAKE THEM THREE WEEKS TO ARRIVE DUE TO DE-MAGNETIZING AND OTHER SPECIAL PROCEDURES THEY HAVE TO GO THROUGH ON WAY TO GET READY FOR THEIR TASK.

4. PRESS IN PORTSMOUTH HAS THE STORY. ARTICLE IN TODAY'S "TIMES" (SUGGESTING VERY SECONDARY BRITISH ROLE OF CLEARING MINES OUT OF THE WAY FOR US HELICOPTER CARRIER, WHICH WOULD DO MOST OF THE JOB) IS NOT CONSIDERED SATISFACTORY BY FCO FROM PUBLIC RELATIONS VIEW. THEREFORE SOME SORT OF RELEASE WILL HAVE TO BE MADE TO THE PRESS SHORTLY (TODAY OR TOMORROW).

5. MENTION WILL BE MADE IN TODAY'S DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY THAT US AND UK HAVE BOTH RESPONDED TO EGYPTIAN REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN CLEARING EXPLOSIVES FROM CANAL, AND THAT THE NATURE OF UK CONTRIBUTION WILL DEPEND ON REPORT OF TEAM SENT TO THE SPOT. IF ASKED, MINISTER WILL SAY UK HAS BEEN IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH US (BUT AVOID SPEAKING OF "JOINT" PROJECT).

6. FOR ALL THESE REASONS FCO WOULD LIKE AUTHORITATIVE CONFIRMATION ON USG POLICY AND CONSULTATION WITH HMG ON NEXT STEPS. BRITISH WILL BE UNABLE TO GO INTO DETAILS UNTIL TEAM RETURNS FROM CAIRO MARCH 22, BUT LOCUS OF DETAILED DISCUSSIONS AND SIMILAR PROCEDURES COULD BE DECIDED BETWEEN TWO GOVERNMENTS BEFORE THEN.

7. WE REQUEST REPLY (EVEN IF INTERIM) TODAY IF POSSIBLE.

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## Message Attributes

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